

NEWS RELEASE

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ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCES JOINT TASK FORCE TO MONITOR TRANSIENT MERCHANTS

BISMARCK -- Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem announced today the formation of a task force to address regulatory and enforcement concerns regarding transient merchants including paintless dent repair operations, roofing contractors and other contractors, as a result of the recent hail storm in the Bismarck-Mandan communities.

The task force includes the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, the Secretary of State's Office, the Worker's Compensation Bureau, the Bismarck and Mandan police departments, Burleigh and Morton County State's Attorneys, the Burleigh and Morton County Sheriffs and the U.S. Border Patrol.

"We will have a coordinated approach to licensing transient merchant contractors and working with local law enforcement authorities to monitor the activities of the contractors, in order to protect consumers," said Stenehjem.

Transient merchants are required to have a transient merchants license, issued by the Attorney General's office. In order to obtain a license the applicant must post a bond. That bond will provide some protection for consumers for the work performed by the transient merchant. In addition, if the transient merchant is a contractor, they must also have a contractor's license issued by the Secretary of State's office.

"You should not do business with any individual or company until you have verified that the transient merchant is licensed with the applicable state agencies," urged Stenehjem. Consumers can check with the Attorney General's licensing section at (701) 328-2329 to determine if a contractor is properly licensed.

Property owners who suspect a contractor is not licensed may contact the Consumer Protection Division at (701) 328-2811, or Secretary of State Al Jaeger's Office at (701) 328-3665, to report violations or obtain other information. Members of the task force will conduct on-site checks to determine compliance with state and local licensing requirements and other laws. If violations occur, unlicensed companies or individuals will be referred to local law enforcement for possible criminal prosecution.

Stenehjem reminds consumers that licensing or bonding is only one consideration in retaining services. Such licensing requirements, while providing some measure of protection, do not guarantee the quality of work. "In addition to licensing information, ask for references from satisfied customers, get written estimates, insist on a complete, written contract and always compare prices with local, reputable companies," Stenehjem said.

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